

REMARKS

In the Office Action, the Examiner allowed claims 26-30, 32-40, 79-88, and 91, and rejected claims 1-9, 11-15, 19-25, 41-45, 48, 50-59, 64-70, 76-78, 89, 90, and 92-94. Further, the Examiner objected to claims 16-18, 46, 49, 60-63, and 71-75 for depending from a rejected base claim, but indicated that these claims each contain allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants canceled claims 10, 31, and 47 in a previous communication. Applicants thank the Examiner for the recognition of allowable subject matter in the present claims.

While Applicants do not necessarily agree with the rejections provided in the Office Action, by the present Response, Applicants have chosen to place the present application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicants have amended independent claims 1, 41, and 59 to incorporate the allowable subject matter of claims 16, 46, and 60, respectively. Additionally, Applicants amended claims 17, 18, and 48 to update the dependencies of these claims and canceled claims 16, 46, and 60 without prejudice. New claims 95 and 96 have also been added. Applicants respectfully note that these new claims generally incorporate the allowable subject matter of claims 49 and 71 into the previous recitations of base claims 41 and 59, respectively. Applicants further note that, in the last Office Action, the Examiner indicated that these combinations are allowable over the prior art.

Upon entry of the amendments, claims 1-9, 11-15, 17-30, 32-45, 48-59, and 61-96 will be pending in the present patent application and are believed to be in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the outstanding rejections and allowance of all pending claims.

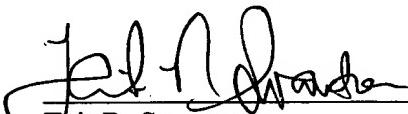


Serial no. 09/682,290
Amendment and Response to Office Action mailed on February 24, 2006
Page 20

Conclusion

Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims should be in condition for allowance. However, if the Examiner believes certain amendments are necessary to clarify the present claims or if the Examiner wishes to resolve any other issues by way of a telephone conference, the Examiner is kindly invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,



Date: March 31, 2006
Tait R. Swanson
Reg. No. 48,226
FLETCHER YODER
P.O. Box 692289
Houston, TX 77269-2289
(281) 970-4545